Dear Friends,

The Utah State University Food Sense program, known nationally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Educator (SNAP-Ed) assists thousands of Utah families each year in making healthy food choices on a limited budget. Group classes for adults and youth are the core of the Food Sense program. These classes address the specific needs of our participants and provide nutrition education as outlined in the current USDA Dietary Guidelines and MyPlate.

- Heidi LeBlanc

A NOTE FROM UTAH’S FOOD SENSE DIRECTOR

Food Sense serves individuals who are either food insecure or at risk of food insecurity. In 2013, the Food Sense program directly educated more than 11,295 adults and 26,115 youth in Utah and was present in all 29 counties across the state. Although Food Sense reached a large number of people, there is still much work to be done. Food Sense continues its effort to grow and expand its education to low-income families in Utah, and partners with Department of Workforce Services, Women Infants and Children, Utah Department of Health, Utahns Against Hunger, Utah public schools and other state and local agencies. Through these collaborative efforts, Food Sense can help provide low-income families with nutrition resources that will help them make healthier choices for themselves and their families.

WHAT IS FOOD SENSE?

Food Sense has established several blogs emphasizing quick and healthy recipes on a tight budget. Two of these blogs have received extra attention. “Table for One: Big Bites on a Little Budget” has become very popular since it was initiated last year. This blog has received more than 9,250 views from individuals from more than 70 countries (see map). Additionally, 392 individuals follow this blog on a regular basis. The blog “Snappily Ever After” has seen nearly 20,000 views from people from more than 10 countries in the past year.

In a survey conducted at the Cache Valley Gardeners’ Market and the Utah Botanical Center Farmers Market in 2013:

- 73% of participants reported they were extremely likely/likely to buy produce they had sampled at the Food Sense booth that day.
- 80% of participants reported they were likely to use the Food Sense recipe demonstrated at the farmers market.

LIVE WELL UTAH

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USU EXTENSION FOOD $ENSE PROGRAM BECOMES A WAY OF LIFE

Kerry Garvin became both a Food Sense program employee and a user within two weeks’ time. The Perry, Utah, resident was the mother of three and in need of employment after a divorce more than three years ago. She began working part-time with the Food Sense program, and as she learned about the program, she realized what a great help it would be to her own family.

“The things Food Sense teaches make sense, but they can seem harder than they really are, and people may be reluctant at first,” Garvin said. “The first Food Sense lesson is on menu planning. It was foreign to me because to that point, I hated to cook and in my first marriage, we ate out five nights a week. The kitchen was this daunting Mt. Everest to me.”

Garvin, now married to Joseph Garvin, has a blended family of seven children with another on the way.

“Dinner time can be stressful with that many kids,” she said. “Around 4:30 or 5, everyone wanted to know what’s for dinner, and I hated that because I hadn’t even thought about it. I knew I needed to change my habits, and when I learned about menu planning, I was stunned at the difference it made. All the power you lose when you don’t have a plan comes back.”

The next step in the program is what Food Sense calls, “cook once, eat twice.” When cooking rice, make a double batch with some food on hand. There are a lot of emotions going on, but I can keep the stress.”

Garvin said she’s learned that even a little change can make a difference, and that all pieces in the program fit well with each other.

“Last fall, Joseph lost his job, and topics I had put off learning like budgeting and food pricing became a necessity,” she said.

“Food $ense”

Particularly helpful to their family was the recently introduced Food Sense Creates Curriculum. The program focuses on making a healthy meal from a carefully stocked pantry and kitchen with options and recipes for using what is available.

“This curriculum came into our lives at the perfect time,” Garvin said. “We have had to use food storage and people have given us food, and Creates has helped us make really good meals with the food on hand. There are a lot of emotions going on, but I can keep everyone nourished and happy and that helps eliminate some of the stress.”

Garvin said the Food Sense program has given her confidence and helped her be in control in the kitchen rather than having the kitchen control her.

Garvin is now over the Food Sense blog, snappilyforever.blogspot.com, where she is charged with living the program, then blogging about it. She said she is delighted to blog about and share her take of Food Sense a month of the month.

The national Nutrition Certification Program (NNCP) allows nutrition education assistants to become certified. The NNCP is a self-study, online program, and lessons must be passed with 80 percent proficiency. Course content was validated through experts review by registered dietitians.

The program became so popular that it was shared nationally, and currently there are 60 programs typically ESNP and SNAP-Ed with 600 participants in the United States.

To sign up, email nncp@usu.edu with first and last name, address, state and organization.

FOOD SECURITY

Food Sense participants increase food security.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEFORE FOOD SENSE CLASSES</th>
<th>AFTER FOOD SENSE CLASSES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never/seldom ate 2½ cups of vegetables a day</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes ate 2½ cups of vegetables a day</td>
<td>409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually/always ate 2½ cups of vegetables a day</td>
<td>407</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

ADDIING VEGETABLES

Food Sense participants improve their diets by adding vegetables to their daily intake.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEFORE FOOD SENSE CLASSES</th>
<th>AFTER FOOD SENSE CLASSES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never/seldom ate breakfast within 2 hours</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes ate breakfast within 2 hours</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually/always ate breakfast within 2 hours</td>
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EATING AS A FAMILY

Food Sense participants increase family mealtime.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BEFORE FOOD SENSE CLASSES</th>
<th>AFTER FOOD SENSE CLASSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never/seldom eat meals together as a family at least three times a week</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes eat meals together as a family at least three times a week</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually/always eat meals together as a family at least three times a week</td>
<td>666</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>